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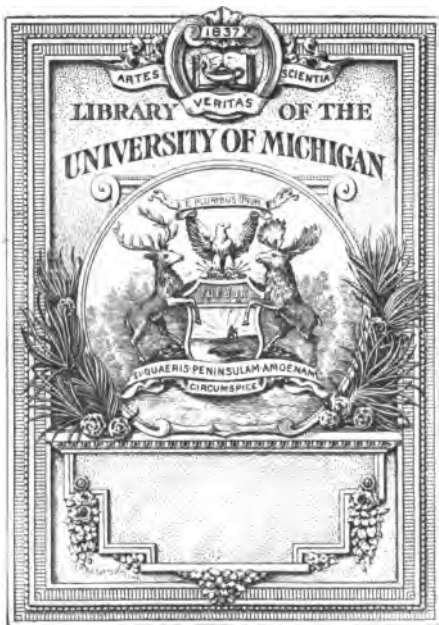
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How I Found
My Brother
By Elbert Hubbard

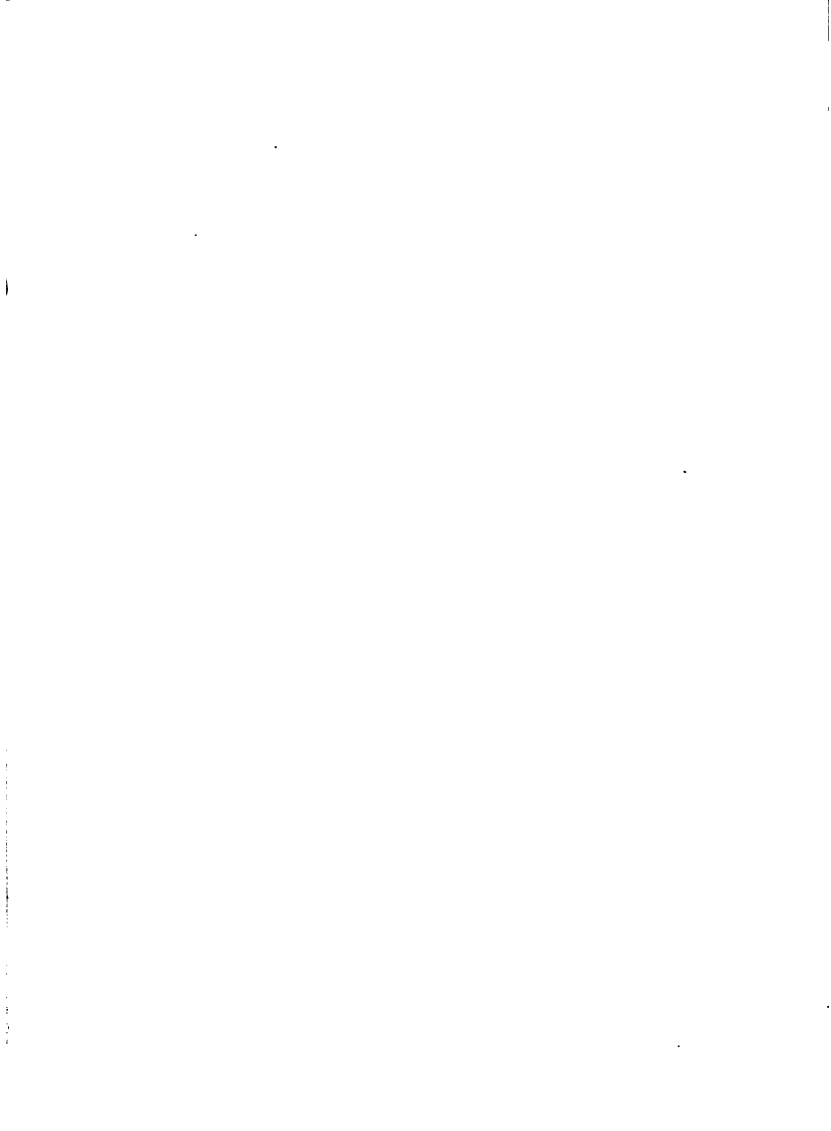


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How I Found My Brother

BY ELBERT HUBBARD



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1907

By Elbert Hubbard

How I Found My Brother



YOU see, it was about like this: I was 'leven years old, going on twelve. Our folks lived at the village of Hudson, McLean County, ten miles from Bloomington, which is in the state of Illinois. My father was a doctor, & being a country doctor did not roll in wealth any to speak of.

In those days every one in Illinois was poor, no matter how much land he owned. However, we owned our farm, had four horses, five cows, a dozen pigs and a flock of hens.

There were always vegetables in the cellar, smoked meat in the wood-shed, and pickled beef in the kitchen. At the back door was a keg of soft soap.

In the garret where I slept, in the winter the snow drifted cheerily in thru the cracks and covered the buffalo robes that covered me. But I didn't lie awake nights thinking about it—country boys who work all day begin to pound their ear as soon as they hit the pillow.

I was the only boy and you know what that is in a family where there are four big sisters! I had to make the garden, milk the cows, bring in wood and churn. Of course there was a lot of fun about it all—more than I knew of at the time. In the winter I hunted rabbits with an old army musket, and brought home so much bunny meat that the whole family went on a strike, and declared I should study my books more and not hunt rabbits quite so much.

In the spring and fall, when the prairie ponds were full of water, the wild

ducks on their regular trips north or south got stop-overs and remained with us a few days—thousands of them—and a few of them neglected to go on. Ducks are harder to kill than rabbits. I used to load the old musket up so heavy that when I would fire it off, if I did not look out sharp, I would get kicked end over end. Then I would get up and look for ducks, and usually they were flying away on “the far and distant horizon,” as the poets say.

In winter I went to school. We used to play “Anteny Over,” with a yarn ball. That is, we chose sides; one gang stood on one side of the school house and the other half on the other. You yelled Anteny Over and threw the ball over the school house. The boy that caught it yelled Anteny Over, but instead of throwing it, he sneaked around the corner and soaked the

first fellow he saw, and usually the ball was soaked in water, so when you got hit you knew it. Then the fellow that was hit had to go over on the other side. When the bell rang the side that had the most men was the winner. ¶ Then we played one-old-cat and three-cornered-cat & Saturdays there were boys playing ball on the prairie back of the church all day, and if I could sneak away I was usually one of the players. I was a genuine Son of Swat.

This brought me many scoldings, and a few mild lickings, because I neglected my work.

As a ball player I was a bird—I used to take a piece of a barrel stave and when that yarn ball came anywhere around I gave it a wallop you could have heard a mile. We pitched underhand, and I could certainly do up the town on pitching as well as crossing

'em out. I became a three-cornered-cat fiend.

Everything that came on the first bound, I gathered in; the flies I caught in my hat. When my big sister played, she used to catch 'em in her apron s s

Finally, I almost forgot how to curry a horse, and the girls had to milk the cows, carry in the wood and hunt for the eggs, because I was off playing three-cornered-cat.

Our folks took two papers, weeklies: the "Baptist Standard" and the "Weekly Pantagraph." I read the "Pantagraph."

Now, one day I saw in the "Weekly Pantagraph" that a man calling himself the agent of the Children's Aid Society of New York, was to be in Bloomington the next week with twenty-five children and that respectable farmers and such who wanted to

adopt children should be on hand and make their selection.

I spelled out that item four or five times, & then carried it to my mother asking what it meant. And she explained to me that these children were orphans, and there were people who had no children of their own, or not as many as they wanted, who adopted them s s

And then a great idea came to me—I needed a brother, and here was a chance to get one. The three brothers I once had died while very young, and altho I could remember them but dimly, there were three little mounds in the graveyard that we used to visit on Sunday afternoons, that kept their memory green.

When I suggested going to Bloomington and picking out a brother for myself, my mother tried to laugh, but I saw the tears running down her

cheeks, and then she threw her apron over her head and went out to bring the clothes in off the line.

The next day I brought up the subject at the table. Everybody smiled—they thought it was a fine joke.

Father concluded that we had all the children he could feed, but I argued that I got fifty cents a day when they were running the Brown cornsheller for driving on the horse-power, and in harvest time I could get a dollar a day. If we had another boy, I could work all the time and the other boy could do the chores. "And give you time to play ball," chimed in my big sister ☞ ☞

I loftily waived her remark, but clung to the argument that I needed a brother ☞ ☞

Sis felt a little sorry for what she had said, so she came over to my side and suggested that these orphan children

were sent out for a month first, and then adopted if all parties were willing & &

“Sent on suspicion,” said father.

“It is better than the other way,” I argued, “because if you don’t like ’em, you don’t have to keep ’em, and the other way you can’t send ’em back after they have been used.”

“The garden work is behind, you know,” I continued, “and I can never do it alone.”

There was a little more parley with instances by father where orphan boys had set fire to hay stacks, turned the cows in the corn, stolen chickens, and cooked them on wire fences by making a fire beneath.

But Sis offset all this by naming three adopted boys who not only worked well, but had joined the Baptist Church and been baptized by cutting a hole in the ice in the creek, only a

few months before. That last settled it, I was given permission to go and pick out a boy. Father and mother would make no promises—if I could get him on a month's trial, all well and good. ¶ And right there I ceased all agitation and talked of other things. I was afraid the permission would be revoked. Not a peep did I give forth on the subject of brothers, but I thought about it all day and dreamed of it by night. I wanted a brother who could work, who could fight and who could play ball & &

The day arrived when the orphans were to be at the Ashley Tavern in Bloomington.

Did I say anything about it?

Not I!

I was up at daylight, without being called. I tried to eat breakfast, but had no appetite. So I just made a bluff at it, and then sauntered out

into the garden and began to hoe. ¶ Soon father took his saddle-bags and went off to see patients. Mother began baking. The girls started for school. ¶ I ran to the barn, stood in the manger and put a bridle on Ol' Molly and backed her out, first fastening her colt in the box stall. I climbed on her bare back. Instead of taking the road that ran in front of the house, I cut across the fields and struck the creek road a mile out of town. Then I dug my heels into the old mare's sides and gave her the gad.

I rode the ten miles in a little over an hour, jumped off at the court house, tied the horse and made for the Ashley Tavern.

I knew what I wanted.

I walked into the office, looked around and asked, "where are themorphans?"

"Parlor—up-stairs," said the clerk.

¶ I climbed the stairs, two steps at a

time and entered the parlor. ¶It was not yet nine o'clock in the morning, but there the children were—washed, dressed and seated all around the walls of the room.

Several men and women were standing around, looking at the children and talking. Two women in black, and a man with long whiskers and upper lip shaved, seemed to be in charge of the orphans.

“How old are you sonny,” said an old man to me patting me on the head.

“’Leven, going on twelve,” I answered.

“Can you work?”

“I guess so,” I answered.

He called his wife over and they both looked at me earnestly. Then the old man said to one of the widow women in black, “We think we will take this one,” at the same time giving me another pat on the head.

“I am already took, you ’ll not get

me," I roared, "I'm here to pick out a brother. I want a boy that can work, and who can play ball!"

This centered attention on me. Most everybody laughed, including several of the orphans.

The boys were dressed in gray and the girls in red. They all seemed quite content—not near as miserable as I thought children should be who had no parents.

I walked twice around the room looking at these orphans, just as I had often looked at pigs at the McLean County Fair.

None of them seemed to answer—all were too yellow, and several of them whispered together and made fun of me. I was in my bare feet and they wore shoes and stockings. All at once I saw in the corner a boy with tow-head and freckles. He had settled down in the corner trying to hide.

He was so homely he was attractive.
s I walked over to him, and asked,
"Can you work and play ball—I want
a brother!"

I did not say anything about fighting
for I had suddenly noticed he was a
hunchback s s

He just looked at me and gulped,
scared like, he was that embarrassed.

s "I want a brother—will you come
with me and be my brother?" I asked.

I omitted all qualifications this time
—my heart went out to this boy—he
seemed so scared and half-sick. I could
work, fight and play ball for both.

"Is your name—your name Mud-
sock?" he whispered.

"No, I'm Bert Hubbard," I said.

"Are you relation of Si Mudsock?"

"Nobody around us by that name,"

I answered.

"Then I'll go with you and be your
brudder," he whispered.

He stood up. He only came to my shoulder, "I'm fifteen," he said as if in apology. "I'm fifteen—I'm not sick—it was spinal complaint—but I'm all over it now. I am strong—I can work and I can play ball."

I took him by the hand and led him to the nearest widow and said, "If you please, Missus, I'll take this one!"

¶ Then the woman asked me who I was, where I came from, who sent me and explained that if my parents wished to adopt a boy, or to take one on probation, they must come and sign the papers.

Just then in walked Uncle Elihu Rogers. I referred to him. Uncle Elihu assured them that I was the son of Doctor Hubbard and that I knew as much as my father, or thought I did. All the time I held my boy tight by the hand.

It was finally agreed that if Uncle

Elihu would go out and get Dr. Crothers, and both of them would sign for the boy, I could have him on a month's trial, to be adopted then by my parents if they so desired.

Dr. Crothers came over, smiled, asked me a few questions. He then gave me and my new brother each ten cents, and signed the papers.

I walked out of the parlor rapidly, down the stairs and over to the court house, leading my new found brother. He carried a bundle tied up in a big red handkerchief.

I unfastened Ol' Molly, climbed up on the hitching rail, and jumped on her back. Then I held out my hand, stiffened my foot, and up climbed my brother. He was nimble and strong—I felt better.

As we jogged along I asked, "Why did you ask me if my name was Mud-sock?" s s

"He's the man that had me last—'dopted me—he lives near Peoria. Is that near here? He used me to bat up flies—beat me, starved me, and then when I ran away he tried to get me arrested. He said I stole a horse!"

"Did you?" I asked.

"Never, I just ran away and stole rides on the railroad clear back to New York—it took me six weeks. There they put me in the Home and brought me out West again to be 'dopted. I don't mind being 'dopted by you. I can work, I can—but I want to go to school a little, to read and study and be a man. I like you—but if Mudsock comes for me, what will you do?"

"Kill him," I answered.

Mother was just putting the dinner on when Ol' Molly, Brudder and I reached the front gate.

I led the boy in, holding him by the

hand, "I've got him," I announced. Mother turned and stared. "Who?"

"My brother!"

"What?"

"I've found my brother."

"Land sakes, are you crazy!"

She looked at me and then at the boy.

It seemed a full minute.

Then she walked right over, put her arms around Brudder and kissed him.

THE month of probation past, and father and mother straightway adopted Brudder, all without any coercion from me. It was very funny—at first they thought it a calamity, then they got to telling the neighbors how they sent me after him.

The lad was alert, obedient, willing. He was grateful for everything; whereas I was a Grabheimer from Grabville s s

Again and again my sisters would say

to me, "Now, why don't you try to be gentlemanly like Brudder, and not hang your hat on the floor and talk back!" s s

I had intended to select a boy who looked like myself—this being the highest type I could imagine. Instead I picked my opposite. I was tall, slender, and had black hair and brown eyes. Brudder was short, and a genuine blond. I was saucy—he was polite. Instead of picking out the strongest and likeliest boy I could find, I chose the smallest, the sickliest, the homeliest one in the bunch. My judgment was in the ditch, and I was carried away on the back of sympathy. It was head against heart, and heart made a home run.

In spite of his physical disability Brudder was very strong, and he could do fully as much work as I. In his books he was a bit deficient, but the

girls taught him evenings, and in long division I had to call upon him to help me out. He used to hold the hank of yarn for mother to wind and would do this without either snarling the yarn or Mother's temper. Once I heard Mother say that Brudder was just like my brother Charley who died when he was nine years old.

We worked together, got jobs at the station unloading lumber, drove on the horse-power and sold corn-cobs to the section men for fuel. Saturday afternoons we played ball. This was Brudder's passion, as well as mine. We found a big chunk of solid rubber on the railroad, that had served its purpose as a car spring. Or did we work it out of the car with a crow-bar? I really can not say. But anyway Brudder got busy cutting out a solid rubber ball with his knife. Very patiently did he work cutting and paring.

At last the ball was done. Oh, it was a daisy! With a round club you could knock it a mile. We then quit playing three-cornered-cat, and my Brudder showed us how to play baseball & He sent away and got the "Rules." He was always sending for catalogs and sample copies of magazines. We made him captain of our team, and when the Bloomington Giants came up to play us we beat them forty-nine to twenty-three. We were making plans to go out as professionals when something terrible happened. It was one Saturday afternoon. Brudder had been with us just six months. He and I had dug potatoes hard all morning, and mother had told us we could have the entire afternoon. We were playing the "Invincibles" from the Normal. Brudder was pitching, and the way he sent that solid rubber spheroid over the plate and around the plate

was marvellous. He could throw a curve that circled the batter's neck—or nearly so. The "Invincibles" weren't in it. They had a cloth ball with a piece of rubber in the center, but we kicked on that and insisted on our own or nothing. Things were coming our way. I was catching. The way I picked that ball right off the wood was marvellous.

All at once I saw a strange man coming across the diamond with a black snake whip in his hand. He was big and had red bushy whiskers. Brudder saw him and turned pale—he was so scared that he just held the ball in his hand and stood first on one foot, then on the other. I was paralyzed.

The big man in his ragged, dirty clothes with his black snake whip was walking right toward Brudder, yelling, "So I've found you at last—I've found you at last!"

Brudder ran across the diamond toward the field. The man followed after him. Suddenly Brudder stopped—his hand with the solid rubber ball shot up, over, around, his knee came up to his chin, and the ball flew forward! s s

It caught the man square on the mouth. He dropped the whip, threw up his hands, reeled, staggered and fell on his back, the blood streaming from his nose and mouth.

The crowd was around him in a minute. We thought he was dead.

Father was sent for and came with his case of instruments ready to cut off a leg, but before he arrived some one had thrown a bucket of water in the man's face. By this time he was sitting up. He had spit out a mouthful of teeth and was trying to talk, asking for that dam boy who had tried to murder him, when he had n't done


nothing to nobody. ¶ I began looking around for Brudder. He could not be found & No one had seen him & We searched the house, and the barn. We looked in the wheat bin and under the hay. Then we discovered that our three-year-old bay colt was gone & A scrap of paper in the oats measure told the tale. On it was scrawled:

DEAR BERT: If I killed Mudsock, they will hang me. If I didn't kill him he will kill me, for he says I am his. I have to leave you. When I score I'll pay for the colt. I am not bad—God has forgotten me, that is all.

BRUDDER

IT was a lonely household after Brudder had gone. We thought he would be back in a few days. We put a notice in the "Weekly Pantagraph," but no one had seen my brother. One of our neighbors at church, once said to mother—"So he stole your horse, did

DON'T
Make

Excuses 

Make
Good!

